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SUBJECT: INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL STRATEGY REPORT
PART 1, DRUGS AND CHEMICAL CONTROL: FRANCE

REF: STATE 0992

1. Summary

France continues to be a major transshipment point for drugs moving through Europe. Given France's shared borders with trafficking conduits such as Spain, Italy, and Belgium, France is a natural distribution point for drugs moving toward North America from Europe and the Middle East. France's presence in the Caribbean, its proximity to North Africa, and its participation in the Schengen open border system, contribute to its desirability as a transit point for drugs, including drugs originating in South America. France's own large domestic market of predominantly cannabis users is attractive to traffickers as well. Specifically, in descending order, cannabis originating in Spain and Morocco, cocaine from South America, heroin originating in or transiting through Turkey, Belgium, and the Netherlands, and Ecstasy (MDMA) originating in the Netherlands and Germany, all find their way to France.

The total number of seizures reported in 2007 (latest public figures) increased by 20.62 percent from 2005 levels to 94,431), including seizures of some cannabis products, morphine, amphetamines, LSD and psychotropic mushrooms. The gross total of the quantity of seizures of cocaine (HCL), Heroin, Khat, and MDMA, which increased in 2006, decreased in 2007. Drug trafficking and possession arrests increased in 2007 by 21.57 percent to 134,320. This represents the largest increase in seizures in the last thirty years. France is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention.

2. Status of Country

Cannabis users are the largest group of drug users in France, according to official French government statistics. By contrast, users of the next most popular drugs, heroin and cocaine, account for approximately 5.7 percent and 3.58 percent of the total number of drug abusers respectively. France's drug control agency, the Mission Interministerielle de la Lutte Contre la Drogue et la Toxicomanie (MILDT, or the Interministerial Mission for the Fight Against Drugs and Drug Addiction), is the focal point for French national drug control policy. Created in 1990, the MILDT (which received its current name in 1996) coordinates the 19 ministerial departments that have direct roles in establishing, implementing, and enforcing France's domestic and international drug control strategy. The MILDT is primarily a policy organ, but cooperates closely with law enforcement officials. The French also participate in regional cooperation programs initiated and sponsored by the European Union.

Possession of drugs for personal use and possession of drugs for distribution both constitute crimes under French law and both laws are regularly enforced. Penalties for drug trafficking can include up to life imprisonment. French narcotics agencies are effective,

technically capable and make heavy use of electronic surveillance capabilities. In France, the counterpart to the DEA is the Office Centrale pour la Repression du Traffic Illicite des Stupefiants (OCRTIS), also referred to as the Central Narcotics Office (CNO). French authorities report that France based drug rings appear to be decreasingly focused on a singly activity, and are increasingly involved in other criminal activities such as money laundering and clandestine gambling.

13. Country Actions Against Drugs in 2007

Policy Initiatives. In late 2004, France launched a five year action plan called "Programme Drogue et Toxicomanie" (Drug and Addiction Program) to reduce drug use among the population and lessen social health damage caused by the use and trafficking of narcotics. A full assessment of the program is expected to be published during 2008, when it reaches the end of its planned duration. Depending upon the result of this assessment, a new program will be introduced. The 2004 program,s successes include launching a 38 million euro(approx. \$50.5 million) national information campaign on cannabis use in 2005 as well as increased options in France,s medical treatment for cannabis and heroin users/addicts. The program also provided funding (up to 1.2 million euro (approx. \$1.6 million)) for France,s contributions to EU and UN counternarcotics programs in four policy areas: Central and Eastern Europe, Africa, Central Asia, and Latin America/Caribbean.

While France,s bilateral counternarcotics programs focus on the Caribbean basin, special technical bilateral assistance has also been provided to Afghanistan through France,s

Development Agency (AFD). 10 million euro -- approximately \$13 million euro went to training Afghan counternarcotics police and to fund a crop substitution program that will boost cotton cultivation in the Afghan provinces of Konduz and Balkh.

Law Enforcement Efforts. In 2008, French authorities made multiple important narcotics seizures. Below find some representative examples:

In an ongoing investigation begun in 2007, French police identified a major drug supplier operating in the Gien area. A round of arrests was made beginning April 1 that netted 28 kilograms of heroin and 425,580 euros cash.

On May 6, 2008, French customs searched a tractor-trailer and discovered 7,746.24 kilograms (7.746 tons) of hashish destined for Great Britain.

June 3, 2008, during routine controls on a train traveling between Paris and Mulhouse, French police apprehended a man carrying over 20,000 Ecstasy pills -- originating in the Netherlands -- in his clothes and luggage.

On November 13, 2008, French police discovered 600 kilograms (about 1320 pounds) of cannabis resin destined for Paris.

Corruption. As a matter of government policy, France is firmly committed to the fight against drug trafficking domestically and internationally. The government does not encourage or facilitate illicit production or distribution of narcotic or psychotropic drugs or other controlled substances, or the proceeds from illegal drug transactions. Similarly, no senior government official is alleged to have participated in such activities.

Agreements and Treaties. France is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention, the 1971 UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances, and the 1961 UN Single Convention as amended by the 1972 Protocol, and a 1971 agreement on coordinating action against illegal trafficking. France and the U.S. have an extradition treaty and an MLAT, which provides for

assistance in the prevention, investigation, and the prosecution of crime, including drug offenses. In 2004, bilateral supplemental extradition and mutual legal assistance instruments were concluded in order to implement agreements in these areas between the U.S. and the EU, which will enhance cooperation further once they enter into force. The U.S. also has a Customs Mutual Assistance Agreement (CMAA) with France. France is a party to the UN Convention against Corruption and the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its protocols against migrant smuggling and trafficking in persons.

Cultivation/Production. French authorities believe that the cultivation and production of illicit drugs is not a significant problem in France. France cultivates opium poppies under strict legal controls for medical use, and produces amphetamines as pharmaceuticals. The government reports its production of both products to the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) and cooperates with the DEA to monitor and control these products. According to authorities, the majority of illicit drugs produced in France come from smaller home laboratories.

Drug Flow/Transit. There is no evidence that significant amounts of heroin or cocaine enter the United States from France. France is a transshipment point for illicit drugs to other European countries. Traffickers move heroin from both Southwest and Southeast Asia (of Burmese origin) to the United States through West Africa and France, with back-haul of cocaine from South America to France through the United States and West Africa. New routes for transporting heroin from southwest Asia to Europe are developing through Central Asia and Russia and into Belgium and the Netherlands. West African drug traffickers (mostly Nigerian) are also using France as a transshipment point for heroin and cocaine. Law enforcement officials believe these West African and South American traffickers are stockpiling heroin and cocaine in Africa before shipping it to final destinations. Most of the South American cocaine entering France comes through Spain and Portugal. To counter this flow, France joined six other European countries to form the Maritime Analysis and Operations Center-Narcotics (MAOC-N) in Lisbon, which should bolster EU capacity to protect its southwestern flank. In addition, officials are seeing an increase in cocaine coming directly to France from the French Caribbean, giving impetus to the creation of the Martinique Task Force: a joint effort with Spain, Columbia, and the UK. France also has seconded a

Liaison Officer to Joint Interagency Task Force South to coordinate maritime counternarcotics operations in the Caribbean Basin. Most of the Ecstasy in or transiting France is produced in the Netherlands or Belgium.

Domestic Programs/Demand Reduction. MILDT is responsible for coordinating France's demand reduction programs. Drug education efforts target government officials, counselors, teachers, and medical personnel, with the objective of giving these opinion leaders the information they need to assist those endangered by drug abuse in the community. In an effort to combat the consumption of cannabis in France, which has consistently increased over the past 20 years, in October of 2007, Etienne Aulaire, the President of MIDLT (since September 2007) announced a new government policy aimed at cannabis users. Beginning in 2008, the state will force those arrested for cannabis use to take a two day class on the dangers of cannabis consumption. The cost of the class, 450 euros (approx. \$660), will be paid by the drug user. France's current law (dating from 1970) includes stiff penalties for cannabis use including up to a year prison sentence and a 3750 euro (approx. \$5,515) fine though the penalties are rarely, if ever, applied. This new measure is intended to be a more effective approach towards the prevention of cannabis use.

14. U.S. Policy Initiatives and Programs

Policy Initiatives/Bilateral Cooperation. U.S. and GOF counternarcotics law enforcement cooperation remains good. During 2008, the DEA,s Paris Country Office and the French OCRTIS continued to routinely share operational intelligence and support one another,s investigations. The DEA and the OCRTIS shared intelligence was developed from a program which identifies orders for precursor chemicals placed from French companies for exportation outside of France. Since its inception seven years ago, this program has resulted in the seizure of 33 MDMA labs worldwide (including 22 in the U.S.), and the arrest of 65 individuals involved in the supply chain.

Additionally, during 2008 the DEA,s Paris Office passed intelligence to OCRTIS regarding two possible drug couriers intending to transit France while traveling from Turkey to the United States. As a result of this information, in February French authorities arrested two Orthodox Rabbis transporting approximately 12 kilograms of morphine base in concealed compartments built into their suitcases.

Information developed from the French investigation was shared with the DEA and several other countries, law enforcement services, which as led to a number of valuable investigative links. The DEA and the OCRTIS regularly exchange information relating to suspected airline internal drug couriers traveling internationally, and other routine law enforcement information that leads to arrests and drug seizures.

The Road Ahead. The United States will continue its cooperation with France on all counternarcotics fronts, including through multilateral efforts such as the Dublin Group of countries coordinating narcotics assistance and the UNODC.

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